

Hurricane/ Disaster Preparedness



For People with Chronic Illness or Disability

Hurricanes and natural disasters in our recent history have highlighted the importance of preparedness for people with chronic conditions, as they can exacerbate symptoms due to the stress of the disaster or create an interruption in care or access to care.

It is important to know that research has shown through 'A study of Hurricane Katrina showed that the evacuees with chronic diseases who required medications were nearly twice as likely to present with acute symptoms on arrival to shelters; of those evacuees, individuals with comorbidities were also three times more likely to be acutely ill on arrival than those with no other conditions.'

In addition to the interruption of treatment, conditions such as stress, the lack of food or water, extreme temperatures, and exposure to infection can contribute to the rapid worsening of a chronic illness that was well controlled before the event.² In some studies, individuals with chronic conditions are more likely than those without chronic conditions to exhibit negative psychological consequences of disasters, although there are conflicting findings regarding this effect (Source: Emergency and disaster preparedness for chronically ill patients: a review of recommendations: Tomio & Sato)'

Recommendations:

Here are some recommendations and guidelines have been provided by researchers, academic societies, and various organizations for disaster preparedness not only for chronically ill patients and their support systems.

Recommendation	Who Needs to be Involved	✓ I Am Prepared!
Talk with healthcare provider about what to do and how to communicate with them during a disaster situation. Be sure to ask for names of agencies or health care centers to report to if condition needs assessment or treatment.	Patient, Healthcare provider	<input type="checkbox"/>
Make a preparedness plan with family, friends and neighbors	Patient, Patient's Family, Patient's Caregivers/ Home Support Staff, Patient's Relevant Friends & Neighbors	<input type="checkbox"/>

<p>Have a Waterproof or laminated list of medications and diagnoses/ Top 3 presenting symptoms</p>	<p>Patient, Help from Healthcare Professional if possible</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Copy of Insurance Card, Healthcare provider name and contact info</p>	<p>Patient, Help from Healthcare Professional if possible</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Prepare a waterproof and insulated emergency kit with any items you may need specific to your condition. Include additional supply of medications for 1-2 weeks after a disaster to ensure continuity of treatment. Also include medical records and have an electronic copy.</p>	<p>Patient, Healthcare Professional, Friends & Family</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Obtain self management skills and stress management. This could include incorporating stress reduction activities into your preparedness kit and limiting exposure to images or news relating to the disaster as well as access to a therapist or crisis support line when needed.</p> <p>Tips: http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/coping-stress-natural-disasters</p>	<p>Patient, Healthcare professional, Family</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Be up to date with any relevant immunizations</p>	<p>Patient, Healthcare Professional</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Have a plan to evacuate early and avoid any cleanup or disaster areas if you are on intravenous treatment or immune suppressants.</p>	<p>Patient, Family</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Be educated about your disease and treatment</p>	<p>Patient, Healthcare Professional, Family</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Consider a sleep aid to help prevent interruption of sleep</p>	<p>Patient, Healthcare Professional</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Have enough food and water on hand to stay hydrated and get major nutrients. IF any food allergies or sensitivities are relevant, have a plan for access to appropriate foods or a backup evacuation plan including relevant lists and allergies/ sensitivities relevant to your condition.</p>	<p>Patient, Healthcare Professional, Family</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>